

GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY AFFAIRS

APPLICATION FOR RURAL ZONE (RZ) DESIGNATION

The goal of the Rural Zone program is to provide tax credit incentives to promote the revitalization of vacant, rural Georgia downtowns by encouraging investment, job creation, and economic growth in long-established business districts by the designation of “Rural Zones.” The Department of Community Affairs and Department of Economic Development will designate up to 10 zones per year, with benefits being earned for a period of five years. In order for businesses or investors to earn credits, properties must be located within a designated zone and meet applicable criteria.

In order to apply for the Rural Zone Designation, a community must meet the following requirements:

- Applicants must be municipalities, counties or consolidated governments with a population of 15,000 or less.
- All applicant governments must be in compliance with the state requirements regarding comprehensive planning and reporting, Service Delivery Strategy, Government Management Indicators (GOMI) Survey, and the Report of Local Government Finances as of December 1, 2017.
- Applicants must possess a concentration of historic commercial structures at least 50 years old within the targeted zone.
- Applicants must provide proof of economic distress based on poverty rate, vacancy of the downtown area, or blight.
- Applicants must have developed a master plan/strategic plan designed to assist private and public investment, as well as a feasibility study or market analysis identifying business activities that can be supported in the targeted zone.

Applicant Government: _____

Mailing Address: _____

Contact Person for questions regarding the application:

Contact Phone Number: _____

Contact Email Address: _____

Population of Applicant Government (must be less than 15,000 residents):	
Total Number of Tax Parcels located within the proposed RZ:	
Total Number of Buildings located within the proposed RZ:	
Total Number of Historic Buildings (at least 50 years old) located within the proposed RZ:	

1. Provide a narrative of the history of the proposed Rural Zone, including its beginnings, what it was like at its most vibrant, and its importance to the community. Be sure to outline what specific factors have led to the decline of the proposed zone.
2. Describe the blighting conditions, if any, found within the proposed Rural Zone. Please also describe the poverty rate of the community at large and the area surrounding the proposed Rural Zone. Please also provide information on the vacancy rate (i.e. number of buildings vs. number of occupied buildings) within the zone. Provide data where available and appropriate.
3. Explain specifically how the community foresees the Rural Zone designation assisting your community. Describe the result the community anticipates, how that result will be achieved, and what specific steps the community will take to achieve these goals.
4. Who will serve on the local team charged with promoting the Rural Zone? Why were they chosen? How is each member expected to contribute?
5. Please describe the local commitment for the revitalization of the downtown. Such local commitment may include, but not be limited to, partnerships and initiatives with local banks or other financial institutions, development authorities or institutions of higher learning, and/or other resources available for small businesses.
6. Are there any revitalization projects ready to proceed within the proposed zone? These projects might include acquisition of property, rehabilitation of buildings, establishment of new businesses, or expansion of existing businesses. Please describe the overall plan for investment projects, as well as job creation projects. Include any attachments that prove readiness to proceed. This documentation could be in the form of commitment letters, plans, detailed cost estimates from qualified contractors, business plans, etc. If there are no specific revitalization activities anticipated, this should also be stated.

Please attach additional pages as needed

APPLICATION CHECKLIST: Check to make sure all the following items on the checklist are included in your submission. Please refer to the DCA Rules, Chapter 110-34-01 for further information.

Application should also include:

- One Cover Letter addressed to both Camila Knowles, Commissioner of Community Affairs, and Pat Wilson, Commissioner of Economic Development which is signed by an authorized agent of the local government requesting designation
- A feasibility study or market analysis identifying the business activities which can be supported in the proposed zone.
- A master plan or strategic plan designed to assist private and public investment.
- Hard copy of map showing boundaries of the proposed Rural Zone and tax parcels located within the zone. Map should also include street names and a title that include the jurisdiction's name.

- Map identifying tax parcels containing vacant structures, vacant parcels and blighted parcels. Please clearly mark the map to show parcels that contain no structures (Vacant Parcel), parcels that contain vacant structures (Vacant Structure – meaning there is no active business located within the structure), parcels that contain blighted structures (Blight), and parcels with historic structures (over 50 years of age). Color coding will be helpful.
- Digital GIS files detailing the proposed Rural Zone (i.e. shapefiles or geodatabase feature classes (with prj)). Applicant may submit maps via thumbdrive. Digital maps, at a minimum, should include individual boundary polygons as listed below:
 1. Parcel file (just the parcels in the Rural Zone) must include parcel ID number
 2. Boundary file for the Rural Zone
- Representative sampling of photographs of proposed zone keyed to a map
- A property tax parcel table that includes parcel number, owner, address, current tax value, acreage, use and condition for each tax parcel included in the proposed zone

Include this form with your original application, as well as 3 copies of the application to:

*Georgia Department of Community Affairs
Rural Zone Program
Community Development & Finance Division
60 Executive Park South, NE
Atlanta, Georgia 30329-2231*

If you have questions, please contact: Cherie.Bennett@dca.ga.gov

Applications must be hand-delivered or postmarked no later than 5:00 PM on October 31, 2017.
Late applications will not be considered.